
Motorcycles and Perfins

Cully Granger (#3712)

The Aurora Machine and Tool Company started as a machine shop in 1886, They made forgings for the then booming bicycle business, many bicycle shops set up brazed there own frames, fenders, tanks and paint but had to buy the front and rear hubs, nipples, spokes handlebars etc.

Around 1899 Oscar Hedstrom (champion high top racer) made his first motorcycle. It was a tandem motorcycle used to pace bicycle racers the front person steered while the rear would keep motor in proper adjustment. Many people think the motor was a French built de Dion Bouton (French perfin D. B.)



France D.B. 8
De Dion Buton, Poteaux, Seine
Used 1907-1937

In 1901 Hedstrom joined with George Hendee and formed Indian Moto Cycle Company. One of the new prototype Indians was sent to Aurora to be studied. The two companies struck a deal. Aurora agreed to make the engine casings and parts and was allowed to sell motors to other companies as long as a royalty was paid to Indian, but could not build a Moto Cycle to compete with Indian.

In 1903 Aurora founded Thor Moto Cycle and Bicycle Company and produced a parts catalog showing all parts needed to assemble a complete "motorcycle" (note different wording). In 1903 there were several motorcycle companies that sprang up making motorcycles identical to the Indian 1902 and the Thor 1903. It was said that by 1905 half the motorcycles at the trade show where Thor clones: Thor-bred, Standard, Flying Merkle, Apache, Raycycle, Manson. And later Sears and Torpedo were added to the list.

In 1906 Indian Moto Cycle company opened their own foundry and in 1907 Thor announced their own

dealerships with completed machines, thus ending any ties between Indian and Thor.



Pattern T-55
Aurora Automatic Machinery Co., Chicago, IL
Used 1908-1938

In 1912 they came out with a 2-speed transmission that was offered on the Henderson. In 1913 they offered a 1000cc and a 1200cc motor. By 1915 Harley, Indian and Excelsior offered a 3-speed transmission. All Thor had to offer was a redesigned 2-speed; although very rugged it left a lot to be desired. By 1916 Thor made its last design changes, a 3-speed transmission and a conventional clutch. Although they assembled a few bikes up until 1918 (some say even as late as 1920) out of spare parts, their last motors were built in 1916, officially ending production.

A couple other bikes that had Thor parts, besides the ones mentioned above were the Cyclone (used Thor frame and forks), the Henderson (Thor's 2-speed tranny), and the Harley Davidson (from 1911 to 1914 used Thor hubs).

Thor did have a lot of success with their racing team from 1908 to 1912. Unfortunately, Bill Ottoway left Thor to go to Harley Davidson's race team and led them from obscurity in 1911 to American champions in 1916. But that is another story.



Pattern M168
American Motor Co., Brocton, Mass.
On issuers of 1902-1908

From the early 1900's to the '20s there were close to 200 motorcycle companies in the USA. The only

other motorcycle-related perfin from the USA of which I am aware, is M168 'MM' from the American Motor Company of Brockton Mass., which is very high on my want list!

Any and all info or input is appreciated. Look for more articles about my passion, motorcycles, and stamps in upcoming issues.

Editor's Note: Cully Granger' address and e-mail can be found on p. 5 of this year's PB in the Secretary's Report. He is among our newest members and is already researching and writing for the Bulletin! HINT to the rest of our members – the Bulletin is a hungry beast! Please help feed it with your knowledge.)
